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ABSTRACT

The need to provide elementary school teachers with effective parent involvement strategies for hard-to-reach parents was addressed by designing an inservice for teachers which presented research-based strategies. Strategies included using a positive, non-threatening approach, employing personal, two-way communication, providing guidance and instruction on using materials designed for activities at home, and home visits. Through the design of a Parent Involvement Continuum (PIC), a volunteer group of 16 teachers identified a "hard-to-reach" family and applied the strategies for an 8-week period. Home visits were strongly encouraged as an ideal strategy. Teachers recorded the frequency and types of contact made during the intervention period. A comparison of the levels of parent involvement before and after the intervention revealed that parent involvement levels can be increased. Teachers indicated that the home visits were effective. It was concluded that parent involvement has a positive effect on parents, teachers, and students. Appendices provide the PIC, parent involvement logs, the home visit survey, teacher directions for project implementation, and teacher surveys. (Author/RH)

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EFFECTIVE TEACHER STRATEGIES TO EHANCE PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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BY
ANNE G. BISHOP

A Practicum Report
submitted to the faculty of the Center for the
Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Educational Specialist

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Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work that it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, and out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed Anne G. Bishop

Anne G. Bishop

Abstract - Final Report

Effective Teaching Strategies to Enhance Parent Involvement in an Elementary School
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Description: Parent Involvement/ Parent Participation/Elementary School/ Parent-School Relationship/Parent Attitudes/Home Visits/Parent-Teacher Cooperation

The need to provide elementary school teachers with effective parent involvement strategies for hard-to-reach parents was addressed by designing an inservice for teachers which presented research-based strategies to a faculty. An overview of these strategies included using a positive, non-threatening approach, employing personal, two-way communication, providing guidance and instruction on the use of materials for home use, and home visits. Through the design of a Parent Involvement Continuum, a volunteer group of sixteen teachers identified a "hard-to-reach" family in the classroom and applied the strategies for an eight week period. Home visits were strongly encouraged as an ideal strategy. Teachers recorded the frequency and types of contacts made during the intervention period. A comparison of the levels of parent involvement before and after the intervention concluded that parent involvement levels can be increased by one or more levels by using this model. Teachers also responded favorably on Teacher Surveys to the effectiveness of home visits. It was concluded that parent involvement has a positive effect on parents, teachers and students. Appendices include the Parent Involvement Continuum, Parent Involvement Logs, Home Visit Survey, Teacher Directions for Project Implementation and Teacher Surveys used to collect the data.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

This practicum was implemented at an elementary school located in north central Florida. The community in which the school resided was considered an educationally oriented community. It offered its citizens many educational resources due to the presence of both a university and a community college.

The elementary school was located in an older established section of the community. It fit the description of the traditional neighborhood school, as the surrounding neighborhood had been successfully integrated. The medium income of the families who live in close proximity to the school was $20,000 for a family of four. With a school population of 740 students, the school maintained a racial balance of 67 percent White and 33 percent Black, without excessive busing. Only 94 students were transported by bus, and all but eight of these students were White.

The school plant was constructed in 1952 and consisted of four wings and nine portables. The design was not conducive to a team teaching approach, which limited the sharing of ideas among faculty members. In addition to a regular kindergarten through fifth grade program, the school

also housed a new Pre-kindergarten facility for handicapped three year olds, a Head Start classroom, and two self-contained educable mentally handicapped units for primary age students. There were also two first grade self-contained Chapter 1 classrooms and a Chapter 1 Basic Skills Development Laboratory for qualified students in grades two through five.

The faculty was comprised of 26 regular classroom teachers, two Chapter 1 self-contained first grade teachers, nine fulltime exceptional educational instructors, nine resource teachers, one Head Start teacher, one guidance counselor and a Curriculum Resource Teacher. With the exception of the recently created exceptional educational department, 53 percent of the faculty have taught at the school for 10 or more years. The administration consisted of a principal, who was completing a second year at this school site.

The writer had been employed at the school site for the past 15 years. During the study, the writer held the position of Curriculum Resource Teacher (CRT). Responsibilities for the position included assisting teachers with the implementation and maintenance of all curriculum areas, administering all level tests in reading and math, and maintaining student records. The position provided opportunities to regularly present new

research, programs and materials to faculty members to improve student achievement and school climate. The writer was also the designated Primary Specialist, responsible for the implementation of the Primary Education Program (PREP) which is mandated by the state of Florida. Prior to this position, the writer taught grades one, two and four.

Parental background information derived from student cumulative folders revealed that 42 percent of the total student population resided in single family homes. A review of the parental occupations indicated that a majority of parents were employed in blue collar or clerical positions. In addition, 36 percent of the students qualified for the free lunch program.

Parent involvement with schoolwide activities was minimal. There were only 126 parent members of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) out of the total population of 740. A School Advisory Committee (SAC) had not been active for the past year and a half. The number of returned responses from the survey used to compile the Annual Report of School Progress was also limited. Only 201 surveys out of 615 were returned.

The entire faculty of the school participated in the writer's staff development inservice to increase parent and teacher communication. A volunteer group of 16 faculty members directly participated in the

implementation of the practicum. All but one of these volunteer teachers were primary level instructors, teaching either kindergarten, first, second or third grade. The exception was the Chapter 1 Lab teacher who served second through fifth grade students.

Table 1

Grade Placement of Teachers and Students in the Project

Grade Placement	# of Teachers	# of Students
Pre K	1	1
K	4	4
1	3	5
2	3	3
3	3	3
Primary EMH	1	1
Chapter 1 Lab (5th grade)	1	1

The 18 students selected to participate in this project were chosen by the volunteer teachers based on data collected from the Parent Involvement Continuum (Appendix A:47) created for this project. The students were chosen by their teachers in order to improve home/school communication. Table 2 reveals background data on the targeted students and their families.

Table 2

Background Information of Targeted Students

Ethnicity	White	Black
Boys	1	11
Girls	2	4
Academic Information		**# of Students**
Students on grade level		5
Students below grade level		12
Students in self-contained EMH		1
Parent Involvement Ratings		**# of Students**
Partnership		0
Supportive		2
Apathetic/Accepting		9
Resistant		7
Marital Status of Parents		**# of Students**
Child lives with single parent		14
Child lives with two parents		4

Parent involvement is critical to our educational system. Research has revealed a definitive link between parent involvement and school success. After an extensive review of all the parent involvement research, Henderson (1987: 1) reported, "the evidence is beyond dispute: parent

involvement improves student achievement." It has a positive effect not only on student achievement, but also on parents and teachers. In a review of research, Becher (1984: 14) observed that involved parents develop a more positive attitude about the school, the community and themselves. In addition, Becher (1984: 16) stated that involved parents had a better understanding of their child's development and an improved relationship with their child. Teachers who were actively involved with parents also benefited professionally, according to Becher (1984: 16) by becoming "more proficient and developing more student-oriented rather that test-oriented curricular activities."

Research indicated that barriers exist which inhibit parent involvement. Sletter and Grant (1988: 1) reported that families of low socioeconomic status (SES) often limited their school contact due to lack of transportation, work schedule conflicts, fear of intimidation, lack of resources and know-how and/or a single parent home environment. Barriers also existed which limited the level of teacher involvement with parents. Time pressures existed as "many teachers commented on the amount of time needed" for parent contact. (Epstein, 1982:103). An equally serious problem was misconceptions teachers may have concerning "hard-to-reach"

parents. Parents could be perceived as apathetic when they actually lack confidence, trust, resources and knowledge (Berliner, 1985: 20). Therefore, it would be important for teachers to have the opportunity to increase personal contact with hard -to -reach parents and use effective strategies to involve parents by addressing their particular needs.

There was strong evidence that parent involvement practices should be addressed at the elementary school participating in the practicum. The parental background information indicated that many parents were of low socioeconomic status and experienced many of the obstacles that are considered barriers to positive parental involvement. The large percentage of single family homes demonstrated a need for special communication strategies for 41 percent of the population. As indicated by Henderson (1985: 53), single parents often need flexible time frames as they are the primary caretaker, responsible for all of the childcare needs. The small percentage of returned responses regarding the school's annual parent survey and the minimal parental involvement in schoolwide activities such as PTA, limited the school's knowledge of parental concerns and minimized personal contact. The Teacher Survey (Appendix B:49) completed by the entire faculty prior to the implementation of the practicum, also suggested

a need to develop alternative strategies for working with parents. On this survey, teachers listed work schedule conflicts as the number one obstacle to parent involvement, and lack of teacher release time was listed as second. The survey also indicated that teachers were concerned over the lack of parent interest in students. There was a schoolwide teacher perception of parent apathy which was noted on the Parent Continuum (Appendix A:47). It indicated that 29 percent of the parents were categorized as apathetic, unconditionally accepting or resistant concerning their involvement level with their child's education. The schoolwide breakdown of parent involvement levels is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Parent Involvement Levels Schoolwide

Parent Involvement Levels	% of Students
Partnership	28%
Supportive	41%
Apathetic/Acceptance	23%
Resistant	6%

Prior to the practicum's implementation, teachers at the school

employed a variety of parent involvement techniques. The faculty indicated on the Teacher Survey (Appendix B:49) that telephone calls and positive students notes were the most frequently employed communication strategies. The teachers at the school did spend time communicating with parents, but more effective strategies were needed to facilitate involvement with hard-to-reach parents.

This practicum attempted to meet the need for increased parent involvement with hard-to-reach parents. Teachers, using effective communication strategies, would create a significant change in the level of parent involvement of the targeted families. Objectives were:

(1) That after increased parental contact, the parent involvement rating levels assigned to targeted families would increase by one level, as measured by the Parent Involvement Continuum.

(2) That after communication strategy inservice, 75 percent of the targeted teachers would consider home visits an integral part of a teacher's professional duty. The results were measured by re-administering the Teacher Survey question, "Do you think home visits should become an integral part of a teacher's professional duty?"

(3) That after eight weeks of implementation, 90 percent of the targeted teacher population would have made home visits.

The results were measured by counting the number of home visits made by the teachers prior to the practicum's implementation, to the number made during the eight weeks of interventions.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research has revealed several alternatives to solving the problem of involving hard-to-reach parents with their child's education. Henderson (1987: 3-6) revealed three basic approaches which educators can implement to improve parent involvement. The Parent-Child Approach focused on the "family process variables," concentrating on the quality of the home environment and enlisted parents in supportive home activities. A Boston project that used this approach was presented by Davies(1988). It provided an Early Learning Center for three to five year olds and educated hard-to-reach parents through home visits, childcare facilities and support groups. Although specific results of the project were not included, Boston was cited as a successful model when working with low income parents.

The second approach to improve parent involvement , as cited by Henderson (1987: 4), was the School-Child Approach, which focused on training parents to work with their children on academics. This approach was successfully employed in York, Ontario. Shuttleworth (1988: 18) reported success with a home-reading program aimed at helping both

low-achieving children and uneducated parents. The results of this program indicated improved reading and literacy development, improved home/school relationships and an increase in library circulation. This project was particularly significant as the results correlated with the current research on parental influences on reading. Greaney (1986: 814) reported that "home factors contribute substantially to reading achievement." These factors were verbal interaction, parental interest in reading, parental reading, access to reading materials, opportunity for reading and parent-child reading.

The third approach used to increase parent involvement was the Community Approach which encouraged the building of a strong partnership between the community and the school. Henderson (1987: 6) reviewed studies conducted by McDill and others, and reported that researchers have "concluded that the degree of parent and community interest in quality education is the critical factor" in higher performing schools. Limited information on a nationally-recognized community-based parent support program, the Parent Resource Center (PRC), described a successful community oriented alternative. This program was designed "to improve familial quality of life" through support programs, education and outreach.

Activities included parent workshops, newsletters containing parenting tips, and volunteer programs to help parents improve parenting skills.

In determining the appropriate strategies for this practicum, it was necessary to consider characteristics unique to the school. Although the Community Approach was a successful alternative, it did not address the need for developing appropriate teacher strategies to ensure effective communication. Most educators, including the teachers involved in this practicum, believe parent involvement is important, but they often did not have the resources to respond constructively. In a teacher survey, Epstein and Becker (1982: 103) determined that even though teachers felt parent involvement was important, many teachers did not know how to involve parents effectively. As reported by Casanova (1985: 20), teachers do not need to add on another job, but rather "the already existing responsibility of communication with parents which can be done more effectively." In addition, a Community Approach did not place the teacher in the role of the most important link between school and home. This role should be encouraged. As Steller (1983: 3) expressed, teachers must be aware of their role as public relation agents in order to improve teacher-parent relations. Scott Cutlip, as quoted by Steller (1983) during an address,

shared, "There is no surer route to a person' heart - or resentment than through his/her child." Personal contact needed be an integral part of a project that attempted to involve hard-to-reach parents.

The Parent Child Approach contained strategies that should be considered when targeting families who maintain minimal contact with the school. First, the school should take into consideration the home environment when attempting to involve parents. Berliner (1985: 20) revealed that it is important for educators to understand the family characteristics of low income students. Often these parents feel alienated from the school and avoid contact. Teachers have perceived this lack of response as apathy. However, research has shown that these parents respond to teacher concerns about behavior by disciplining the child at home but do not share their actions with the teacher. (Berliner, 1985: 21).

Home visits appeared to be a strategy which allowed teachers to concentrate on the home environment, as advocated by the Parent Child Approach . It not only provided teachers with invaluable home environment information, but also offered a non-threatening common ground for parent teacher conferences, if conducted appropriately. Although documented research concerning the effectiveness of home visits was limited, the

personal experience of the writer and teachers who have made home visits indicated that home visits provide valuable insights into children and their families. The 1989-1990 Chapter 1 model for first grade students in this district was a case in point. Home visits were prioritized in this model and the results of the Teacher Survey (Appendix B:49) indicated that both Chapter 1 teachers at the school site felt home visits should be considered an integral part of teacher contact with hard-to-reach parents. In addition, 80 percent of these Chapter 1 families were considered "supportive" on the Parent Involvement Continuum (Appendix A:47), and the teachers believed that the parent support was directly related to their effectiveness during home visits. Home visits offer a "personal touch" to parent /school communication which Lindle (1989: 13) reported is the ingredient parents value in school relations. As an advocate of home visits, Love (1989: 29), shared personal observations concerning home visits by stating,"A brief informal visit in a child's home once before the start of school and later during the year has a positive ripple effect on everyone concerned. For the child, for the parent, for the teacher, and for the principal - home visits are an irreplaceable tool!"

The School-Child Approach incorporated useful strategies to encourage

parent involvement. By training parents to work with their children, the school not only improves the home/school relationship, but also provides students with the opportunity to become more successful. In a recent research review, Sletter (1988: 1) suggested that "experimental studies found modest levels of parent involvement raised student achievement." Sleeter stated, "These strategies included short, structured reinforcement drills daily..." (Sletter, 1988: 1). In addition, Brandt (1989: 24) reviewed Epstein's research on parent involvement and reported that showing parents how to help at home was "likely to increase student achievement."

Teachers were found to be supportive of the School-Child approach which encouraged parents to work at home with their children. Moles (1982: 45) reviewed the research on parent participation in children's education by citing a six-state regional teacher survey. It indicated that "while teachers were not enthusiastic about parent participation in curriculum development, instruction or school governance, . . .teachers did support other forms of parent involvement, such as assisting with homework or tutoring." These teachers also felt that teachers should give parents ideas about how to help. They also noted that their own schools did not usually provide opportunities for parents and teachers to work together on such

activities. Moles' (1982: 45) review of research revealed that principals were also supportive of parent participation in home learning, as (Moles: 25) cited Williams (1981) in a companion study. The principals agreed with teachers by observing that often "the parents lack adequate training to prepare them for an active role in children's home learning."

The available research suggested that a parent involvement project that incorporated characteristics of both the Parent Child Approach and the Parent School Approach would be most effective for the practicum. This decision to incorporate both approaches was based upon the research concerning teacher/parent attitudes and the success of projects that were reviewed. The strategies chosen were to effectively address the school's unique situation and provide a solution to the lack of parent involvement among the targeted families.

The Parent-Child Approach should be incorporated by providing inservice for teachers. Teachers would receive instruction on effective communication techniques to involve parents, encouraging a positive learning environment in the home. These strategies would include using a positive, non-threatening approach, employing personal two-way communication, providing guidance and instruction of materials for home

use and home visits. Teachers would also be given background information concerning the problems and perceptions of hard-to-reach parents as they attempt to parent. The cultural differences of black students should also be addressed. In addition, teachers could incorporate home visits into their parenting strategies by visiting the homes of the targeted students. This home visit strategy could be successfully implemented at the school, even though the faculty felt that a lack of release time prohibited teachers from positive parental involvement. Released time was made available because the writer had access to grant monies to pay teachers in the area of parent training. Sharing sessions among teachers could also be made available, providing them with the opportunity to share effective parenting strategies with colleagues. This strategy would enable the targeted teachers to broaden their communication techniques beyond the most freguently used, which were telephone calls and positive student notes. By implementing all of these Parent-Child strategies, the problem of parent intimidation and mistrust could also be addressed and remedied.

This project should incorporate the School-Child Approach in order to improve parent involvement. Home visits would provide teachers with the opportunity to train parents to help their child with academics. Training

would involve demonstrating to parents effective techniques for reading with children and providing books for parents who do not have access to them in their home. Materials from the district's Toy Lending program could also be made available to the parents of the Pre-Kindergarten handicapped children during home visits. Teachers would also have the opportunity to explain homework packets and classroom procedures that could have been unknown to the targeted families. This strategy would be compatible with the needs of the school because the teachers indicated that they believe assistance with homework is the most effective and appropriate form of parent involvement. In addition, a majority of the targeted teachers indicated that they believe that parents of hard-to-reach children do not have adequate training, skills and/or materials to help their child at home. It was determined that the successful implementation of these combined strategies would enable the school to solve its problem of limited parent involvement with the targeted students.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This practicum was organized and implemented according to the following specifications:

The writer's responsibilites included the presentation of data to the faculty which indicated a need to address parental involvement practices, the creation of an instrument to identify students who would benefit from increased home/school improvment, the development and presentation of an inservice component concerning effective parent communication strategies and the weekly monitoring of teacher implementation of the project.

The volunteer teachers were responsible for the direct contact with students and their families. They were required to keep a Parent Involvement Log (Appendix C: 52), indicating the number and type of contacts made weekly. The teachers determined the frequency and types of contact necessary to improve communication with the parents, based upon their professional judgement. The recording of data and paperwork required from the participating teachers was kept to a minimum, in order to allow the teachers to concentrate their efforts on the families.

The following procedures were implemented:

Week 1

The writer developed the Parent Involvement Continuum (Appendix A:47) and the Teacher Survey (Appendix B:49), prior to the start of the practicum. It was adminstered to the faculty in order to determine if a measurable need existed to enhance the parent involvement level at the school. The Parent Involvement Continuum (Appendix A:47) was designed to determine the parent involvement level of the students both in individual classes and schoolwide. In addition, it would identify those students of hard-to-reach parents. The Teacher Survey (Appendix B:49) was developed to ascertain teacher opinion of effective parent involvement strategies.

These surveys were administered by the writer at a faculty meeting. Teachers were assured that their responses were confidential. Student initials were used on the Parent Involvement Continuum (Appendix A:47) to offer some anonymity for the families. The Teacher Survey (Appendix B:49) was not anonymous, but teachers were given the option of not answering any question(s) found unacceptable. All of the Parent Involvement

Continuums (Appendix A:47) and Teacher Surveys (Appendix B:49) were returned.

The faculty was alerted to the possibility of a parent involvement research project which would benefit the school and enable the writer to conduct a practicum. No opposition was met.

Week 2

The results from the Parent Involvement Continuum (Appendix A:47) were compiled and analyzed. (see Table 3). The Teacher Survey (Appendix B:49) was reviewed by the writer to determine an overall teacher perspective on parent involvement. The writer also began to collect significant background data on the parent and school population to share with the faculty. Student cumulative folders were used as a primary source of information. The Annual Report of School Progress and the Neighborhood Housing Authority were also used as references.

Week 3

A presentation was given to the staff at a faculty meeting in order to share the results of the completed surveys and prepare for the implementation of the proposal. An overview of the project's implementation plan was also presented so teachers could determine if

they were interested in participating in the practicum. In addition, the demographic information found in Chapter 1 of this report was shared. Many teachers were surprised to learn of the school's increased enrollment, the number of single parent families, and the decline in economic status of the majority of parents. Recent re-zoning and the addition of new programs impacted the profile of the school and supported the evidence for the increased personal contact with parents.

A date was selected for the entire faculty to participate in an inservice to provide research concerning effective teacher strategies to enhance parent teacher communication.

Week 4

The parent involvement inservice was held for the entire faculty. Thirty- five out of forty- two faculty members were in attendance. The writer addressed four issues concerning parent involvement. Using an overhead projector, the writer discussed the following questions:

1) Does Parent Involvement Make a Difference?

2) Is Parent Involvement a Teacher's Professional Duty?

3) What Barriers Exist Which Inhibit Parent Involvement?

4) What Are the Most Effective Parent Involvement Strategies?

During the presentation, research was shared, justifying the effectiveness of parent involvement. An overview of the effective communication strategies was presented. These strategies included using a positive, non-threatening approach, employing personal two-way communication, providing guidance and instruction on the use of materials for home use and home visits. Teachers were told that the key words to be stressed were "personal" and "positive". Teachers were given the opportunity to share successful parent involvement techniques that were part of past experiences. The general concensus of the discussion was that, although parent involvement is time consuming, it is always beneficial. As one teacher explained, involving parents made the job easier because teachers were then able to share not only the responsibility, but also the successses of educating each child.

The writer also provided spiral notebooks containing pertinent research articles by Berliner, Casanova, and Greaney (see references), a countywide Parent Involvement Resource Directory, "Happygrams", and directions/forms for the implementation of the practicum.

After the presentation, teachers who were participating in the research remained to receive specific information needed for the project

implementation. Fourteen teachers remained. Each teacher was asked to choose a student from the classroom who could benefit from an increase in parent involvement. Participants were asked to refer to the Parent Involvment Continuum (Appendix A:47) they had completed earlier, but were not told to choose a student from any specific category. Types of effective strategies were reviewed and home visits were strongly encouraged. The writer offered to accompany any teacher on home visits in order to alleviate any teacher apprehension or safety concerns. Parent Involvement Logs (Appendix C:52) were provided weekly for teachers to indicate the type of strategy used and the frequency of parent contact. Teachers were assured that minimum paperwork would be required. Each log required only checks or tally marks and a place for comments, if necessary. The data collection would last eight weeks. Teachers were also asked to complete a Home Visit Survey (Appendix D:54), if a visit was made. Participants were informed that they would rate the level of parent involvement of their targeted student at the end of the project to determine if any change had occurred. Written Teacher Directions (Appendix E:56) were provided for the project to summarize the procedures. The teachers were very receptive to the implementation. One teacher was so motivated, she went on two home

visits immediately following the meeting.

Week 5

The writer met with four teachers who had expressed interest in the project, but were unable to attend the inservice. Special concerns were addressed with the two Emotionally Handicapped teachers whose targeted students are bused long distances and live outside the school zone. They both felt that home visits would be most beneficial in these situations. One of these teachers eventually dropped out of the project and the data was not included in the results.

By the end of the first week, parent success stories were already being shared among the faculty. One teacher arrived at the home of her student and found another parent visiting. This parent had already received a home visit and re-assured her friend that it was okay that the teacher was visiting because her son's teacher had also been to her home. They were glad that their children had been re-zoned to this school and could tell that the teachers really cared.

Week 6

A kindergarten teacher held a parent involvement inservice and the writer attended. This inservice evolved out of discussions the writer had

with the teacher during the early planning stages of the practicum. The topic of the inservice was, "The Reading and Writing Process". Fourteen parents attended. The writer observed that the parents who attended were those that the teacher had rated at the "supportive" or "partnership" levels on the Parent Involvement Continuum. (Appendix A:47). The workshop indicated a heightened awareness of the effectiveness of parent involvement at all measurable continuum levels.

Informal conversations took place between the writer and the teachers throughout the first two weeks of intervention. Teachers completed and turned in the Parent Involvement Logs (Appendix C:52) for weeks one and two. During this two week period, 14 home visits were made and 119 contacts were recorded.

Week 7

Sharing groups by grade levels were not held, as originally planned in the practicum proposal. It was not possible to hold a meeting with fourth and fifth grade teachers because none chose to participate in the project. In addition, Spring Break interrupted the schedule and it seemed inappropriate to call teachers together immediately after break. Also, unexpected meetings concerning discipline and school climate were called. The writer

determined that another meeting would negatively affect the cause of the project. The writer made a special effort to individually encourage teachers to re-establish parental contact after the break. Teachers continue to share their success stories with the writer.

Week 8

A parent involvement update was presented during a faculty meeting. Participating teachers were asked to share specific changes they had observed in both the child and parent. A quick overview of the kindergarten parent inservice was also shared with the faculty.

Teachers continued to record their contacts. The Parent Involvement Logs for intervention weeks three and four were collected. Seven home visits were made and 110 contacts were tallied.

Week 9 - 10

An informal sharing time among interested teachers was held. The major thrust of the discussion revolved around teacher interest to go beyond the limited structure of this practicum study. Participating teachers suggested that an effort be made at the conclusion of the project to share its anticipated success.

Individual teacher conferences were held with the writer under the

Primary Education Program (PREP) guidelines, and conference time was used to discuss viable parent involvement strategies that could be used to improve student progress. These strategies were listed on students' Individual Educational Plans for PREP. This type of meeting was not originally considered when the practicum proposal was written. It was more effective than the groups meetings originally planned because it was an effective method to monitor and encourage progress on an individual basis.

Parent Logs for intervention weeks five and six were collected. Three home visits and 102 contacts were recorded.

Week 11

Teachers were given written directions concerning procedures for submitting a report for stipends for home visits. A tentative "Celebration Meeting" was planned to share the successes and collect post practicum data. Teachers continued to share and collect data on students.

WEEK 12

This was the last week for data collection. The writer began preparing a report for teacher stipends for home visits. Teachers were reminded to complete any home visits during this week and return the Home Visit

Survey. Teachers were also sent a reminder to turn in the Parent Involvement Logs for intervention weeks seven and eight. All Parent Involvement Logs and Home Surveys were collected from all but the one teacher mentioned earlier in week five. Personal and professional problems prohibited her from completing the project. One other teacher did not complete the last two weeks of Parent Involvement Logs due to the early arrival of her baby. During these last two weeks, nine home visits were made and 80 contacts were recorded.

Week 13

A "Celebration Meeting" was held for the participating teachers. It served as the culminating activity for the project. It was designed as an informal gathering and refreshments were served as a "thank you" to the participants. Twelve of the sixteen teachers were in attendance. Teachers were asked to share their thoughts, observations and experiences concerning the project. Every teacher felt that the project was successful and shared touching stories that verified the changes that occurred with both children and parents. The teachers were asked to complete a Participating Teachers' Post Survey (Appendix F:58) in order to determine the measurable successes of the project.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The cumulative results of this project revealed that the teachers, students, and parents benefited from its implementation. These results were determined by measuring the pre intervention data with the post intervention data. In addition, the success of the project was also evidenced by the sharing of anecdotal records concerning teachers and parents.

An increase in the parent involvement level was measured by comparing the parent involvement rating given to a student before and after project implementation. The first outcome objective stated that all targeted students would have an increase on the Parent Involvement Continuum (Appendix A:47) of one level. The results showed that parent involvement level of sixteen children improved by one or more levels. Two children's ratings remained at the same level.

Table 4

Post Intervention Results of Parent Involvement Ratings

Degree of Change	Number of Students
No change in rating level	2
Parent involvement rating increased by one level	9
Parent involvement rating increased by two levels	6
Parent involvement rating increased by three levels	1

It was significant that although not all of the parent levels of the targeted students increased, seven or 38% increased by two or more levels, and 16 or 88% of the total group met the specific objective. The two targeted students that did not show an increase provided a realistic insight into the parent involvement issue that can not be overlooked. It indicated

that situations can occur when even an intensive effort by teachers can not increase a parent's level of involvement. In each case, the teachers made two to four home visits and used a variety of additional strategies. But, in one case the mother had left the home and the teacher was only able to make contact with a babysitter and an aunt. In the other situation, the parent was receptive to the help, visits and positive feedback, but did not attempt to initiate any contact. Nevertheless, these two teachers reported on the Post Survey (Appendix F:58) that they benefited from the project and would make home visits in the future.

The second outcome objective was in reference to teachers' acceptance of home visits. In both the pre intervention Teacher Survey (Appendix B:49) and the Participating Teachers' Post Survey, (Appendix F:58) teachers were asked, "Do you think home visits should become an integral part of a teacher's professional duty?" On the pre intervention Teacher Survey, (Appendix B:49) 11 out of the 16 or 68% teachers stated "yes", four stated "no", and one was undecided. When the same question was asked in the Participating Teachers' Post Survey, (Appendix F:58) fifteen out of sixteen or 94% of the teachers answered "yes". Only one teacher answered "no".

Therefore, the outcome objective of 90% was met. Two teachers in support of home visits added that they felt the visits should be voluntary and made when necessary. One teacher added that stipends should be provided.

The last outcome objective projected that 90% of the participating teachers would make home visits. Twelve out of the 16 teachers, or 75% made home visits. Four of the teachers did not. Even though this outcome objective was not specifically met, the writer feels that the overall goal of increased parent involvement was met. In all four of the cases, the parent involvement levels of the students increased, even though home visits did not occur. In two of those cases, the parent involvement level increased by one level, and in the other two cases the parent involvement level increased by two levels. These results indicate that professional judgement must be valued in determining effective strategies appropriate for each student. It was not the intent of the project to force teachers into making home visits. Instead, teachers were to increase parent involvement levels by developing effective strategies. These results indicate that this overall objective was met.

The increased frequency of home visits was also measured by counting the number of home visits made by the teachers prior to the project's implementation, to the number made during the project. Twelve home visits were made by the teachers to students' homes during the first twenty -four weeks of school, prior to the introduction of the project. Thirty- three visits were made during the eight weeks of project intervention. Therefore, in one third the time, there was a 36% increase in the number of home visits made.

Table 5

Frequency of Home Visits

Number of visits made	Number of teachers
no visits made to homes	4
one visit made per home	5
two visits made per home	4
three visits made per home	1
five to eight visits made per home	2

Additional data was collected concerning the results of the home visits. A Home Visit Survey was completed by the teachers who made a home visit. All twelve surveys indicated that the teachers witnessed a positive change in the parents' attitude before the visit was over. In addition three other questions were asked concerning parental attitudes. The results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Responses to Home Survey Questions

Questions	Yes	No
Was there a change in attitude before you left?	12	0
Did the parent seem concerned about the child's education?	11	1
Did the parent offer to help the child?	11	1

These results concur with current research which indicates that once the barrier is removed, teachers find parents do care about their child's

education and are willing to help if given guidance.

A Participating Teachers' Post Survey (Appendix F:58) was developed as an addendum to the practicum proposal in order to receive more information during the post intervention period. In addition to requesting responses to the questions referring to the outcome objectives, information was requested concerning two other areas. First, the question was asked," How valuable was the home visit?". The results in Table 7 reveal the responses of the twelve teachers who made home visits. It indicates that 100% of the teachers found the visits valuable.

Table 7

Responses to the question, "How valuable was the home visit?"

Type of Responses	Number of Responses
Very valuable	9
Valuable	3
No significant difference	0
Counterproductive	0

The research cited in this project indicated that parent involvement was beneficial for the teacher, parent and student. The Participating Teachers' Post Survey (Appendix F:58) requested that the teachers respond to the question, "Which group(s) benefited positively from the increased parent involvement?" Ten out of 18 or 55% of the teachers indicated that all three groups benefited from the involvement. Table 8 reveals the responses to this question.

Table 8

Responses to the question, "Which group(s) benefited positively from the increased parent involvement?"

Types of Responses	Number of Responses
teacher, parent and student benefited	11
student only benefited	3
teacher only benefited	2
parent and student benefited	1

Table 8 (continued)

Types of Responses	Number of Responses
teacher and student benefited	1

Additional assessment of the project can be made by citing observations made by the writer and teachers in the project. A heightened awareness of the need for parent involvement occurred after the teacher inservice. Parent involvement became a "buzz word" around the school. A discipline plan was developed with parent involvement as a focal point in the plan. Also, teachers who did not choose to participate in the implementation of the project increased parent involvement levels and shared success stories. The writer noticed that the types of contacts that were initiated were not all traditional one-way communications. Participating teachers and parents expressed concern that the student's teacher for the following school year continue the home/school contact.

Some participating teachers went beyond the suggested effective parent involvement strategies and committed themselves beyond the call of duty. One teacher took a student to the movies and another invited the child to

join the family for the night. One student made weekly visits to the teacher's home and the teacher's children provided a "big brother atmosphere" for the child. This level of commitment was not a design of the project. It could be viewed as an outgrowth of the true effectiveness of developing personal contact with students and their families. These events also serve as an indication of the level of dedication of these particular teachers.

The comment section of the Parent Involvement Logs also contained anecdotal records which contributed to the results of the project. As indicated, two teachers recorded no change in the parent involvement level and their logs contained many contacts but frustration with the lack of parental response. The majority of comments indicated change and positive growth over the eight week period. Below are some excerpts from the logs:

. . . one EMH child asked the teacher to come back and visit his house again soon because his mother had been so nice to him since the visit.

. . . one first grade teacher took a camera on her home visit and had the parent take pictures of the child and teacher while they played instructional games.

. . . one mother of a second grade student began coming by school more often and began involving the son in after school activities, at the teacher's suggestion.

. . . one first grade teacher saw a change in the targeted student, who is now completing work and perceiving herself as a good student.

. . . one EMH teacher described the results of sending "good notes" home with students every day as "incredible".

. . . the majority of teachers brought materials into the homes and demonstrated their use to the parents.

. . . one third grade parent shared that in the past, she had only heard from teachers when her son was in trouble. She was "thrilled" with the teacher's positive manner and emphasis on academic help at home.

These observations provide additional evidence that the practicum was successful in increasing the level of parent involvement for hard-to-reach parents.

Chapter V

Recommendations

This practicum identified a need for increased parent involvement at an elementary school. The results indicated that the use of effective parent involvement strategies, including home visits, can make a difference in the lives of students, parents and teachers. It is the writer's intention to continue addressing the parent involvement needs at the school.

The writer plans to encourage the Chapter 1 Basic Skills Laboratory Program to incorporate this model in its parent involvement plan for Chapter 1 students at the school. Also, the writer plans to encourage teachers to initiate parent contact at the beginning of the school year with all parents, since this practicum was implemented during second semester. The targeted students involved in this project will be identified for the new teachers in the fall, in order to continue successfully involving the parents in their child's education. The writer intends to share the results of this project at the district level and would be willing to share an overview of the project or present the parent involvement inservice with any audience interested in increasing the parent involvement level of hard-to-reach parents in elementary schools.

The future success of parent involvement models resembling this practicum rests upon administrative and district support. It must be recognized that teachers are the most influential contacts for effective parent involvement. The teachers who are participating in home visits are making additional commitments without stipends and/or release time. The state of Florida has acknowledged the importance of parent involvement, but needs to provide opportunities for teachers to make this contact. This writer recommends that leadership at the district and state levels recognize the overall effectiveness of parent involvement and support it accordingly.

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Appendix A

PARENT INVOLVEMENT CONTINUUM

TEACHER _____
GRADE _____

1. ***PARTNERSHIP*** - parent actively "seeks out" information concerning the student. Parent is involved in the school community by volunteering time, materials, support, etc.

2. ***SUPPORT*** - parent is helpful and cooperative when contact is made. Parent initiates school contact when a need arises.

3. ***APATHY/UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE*** - parent is unaware of classroom happenings. Parent rarely initiates contact. Accepts student's program/progress without question. Parent often indicates lack of involvement due to time restraints.

4. ***RESISTANCE*** - Parent has not initiated school contact, is difficult to reach, does not respond to notes, telephone messages. May be hostile, threatened or afraid.

Directions - Using the descriptors above, place each one of your students' first and last initials in the category below that best describes their parents' level of involvement in their education.

PARTNERSHIP	SUPPORT	APATHY/ACCEPT	RESISTANCE

APPENDICES

Appendix B

TEACHER SURVEY

TEACHER _____

1. Approximately, what percentage (%) of your parents are *appropriately* involved in their child's education?

0%-25%	26%-50%	51-%-75%	76%-100%
(0-6 students)	(7-12 students)	(13-18 students)	(19-25 students)

2. Do you think parent involvement in a child's education makes a positive difference? (Circle) Yes No

3. Which one of the following areas of parent involvement do you consider most effective and appropriate ? Rank 1,2,3,4, with 1 being the MOST IMPORTANT.

____ Curriculum development
____ Instruction
____ School governance
____ Assistance with homework

4. Do you think home visits should become an integral part of a teacher's professional duty? Yes No
Please respond why or why not. _____
_____

5. How many home visits have you made this year? (first semester) _____

6. In general, which appear to be the three major <u>obstacles</u> to positive parent involvement at this school? Place a check (X) by three areas.Place an asterisk (*) by the most prevalent problem that you checked.

____ lack of parent interest
____ fear of intimidation
____ lack of transportation
____ unpleasant school experience
____ work schedule conflict
____ lack of teacher release time to involve parents

7. After ranking your class on the parent involvement continuum, do you feel that the parents of the children listed under the "Resistance" category have adequate training, skills and/or materials to help their child at home?

Yes No

8. Please check(X) the following parent involvement techniques that are utilized in your classroom:

_____ weekly/monthly classroom newsletters
_____ positive student notes (Happy grams)
_____ telephone calls
_____ home visits
_____ workshops for parents
_____ homework packets
_____ utilization of Compu-dial
_____ reports that require parent signature
_____ other_____

Appendix C

PARENT INVOLVEMENT LOG

TEACHER _____ STUDENT _____ WEEK # _____

	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.
PHONE CALL					
POSITIVE NOTE					
INFORMAL MEETING					
NEWSLETTER					
HOMEWORK NOTE					
HOME VISIT					
OTHER(specify)					

Comments/observations _____

_____

_____

PARENT INVOLVEMENT LOG

TEACHER _____ STUDENT _____ WEEK # _____

	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.
PHONE CALL					
POSITIVE NOTE					
INFORMAL MEETING					
NEWSLETTER					
HOMEWORK NOTE					
HOME VISIT					
OTHER(specify)					

Comments/observations _____

_____

Appendix D

HOME VISIT SURVEY

PLEASE COMPLETE THE QUESITONS BELOW CONCERNING YOUR HOME VISIT(S)

1. Rate the following areas as positive, negative, or no change as they relate to your student.

	before the visit	after the visit
attitude toward school	_____	_____
attitude toward teacher	_____	_____
behavior	_____	_____
completion of work	_____	_____

2. Was the parent threatened by your visit? YES NO
   Was there a change in attitude before you left? YES NO

3. Did the parent seem concerned about the child's education? YES NO

4. Did the parent offer to help the child? YES NO
   How?_____

   _____

Comments/Observations concerning the home visit(s)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix E

TEACHER DIRECTIONS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROJECT

1. Complete Parent Involvement Continuum on your entire class.

2. Identify one student that would benefit from increased home/school communication.

3. Begin increasing parental contact by utilizing effective parent communication strategies.

4. Record a check (✓) in the appropriate box on the Parent Involvement Log when contact is made.

5. Schedule a home visit. Preferably early in the eight week period. I will be glad to accompany you if you are uncomfortable or are concerned about personal safety.

6. Complete the Home Visit Survey. Note the date of your home visit on the survey in order to receive a stipend for the visit(s).

7. Turn in the Parent Involvement Log (the one with the checks ✓) at the end of every two week period.

8. Meet at the end of the eight weeks to re-evaluate the level of the parent's involvement and the effectiveness of home visits.

Appendix F

PARTICIPATING TEACHERS' POST SURVEY

1. Prior to the implementation of this parent involvement project, you ranked your student, _____ at the parent involvement level of _____ .

Now that the project has been completed, please re-rank the parent involvement level of your student. Please circle below.
The parent involvement level now is:

PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT APATHETIC RESISTANT

2. Do you think home visits should become an integral part of a teacher's professional duty? Yes No

3. Did you make a visit to the home of your targeted student? Yes No

If yes, how many? _____

If no, why not? _____

_____

_____

4. How valuable was the home visit? Please circle.

very valuable valuable no significant difference counterproductive

5. Which group(s) benefited positively from the increased parent involvement? Please circle.

teacher (yourself) parent your student

6. Do you see yourself participating in home visits in the future?

Yes No